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FOR S/P KRASNER

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SUBJECT: POTENTIAL POLICY PLANNING INITIATIVE WITH IRAQI MFA

Classified By: Ambassador Zalmay Khalilzad for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (U) The Iraqi Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) has expressed an interest in establishing ties to the Department's Policy Planning staff and receiving training on strategic planning and dealing with longer term issues. Labid Abawi heads the MFA's policy planning staff and has reached out to the Embassy in an effort to provide his people the tools they need to work more effectively. Mr. Abawi said his first priority is obtaining training on how to formulate policy and on future planning. He has also requested help defining what the policy planning staff's role should be within the MFA and in conjunction with other Iraqi ministries. Mission welcomes the opportunity to both develop the MFA's policy planning capability and engage the GOI in policy planning talks on over-the-horizon issues which are often shunted aside in the press of business in Baghdad. The visit to Washington should include a substantive dialogue as well as training sessions for the MFA policy planners.

MFA Policy Planning Division

¶2. (U) The MFA policy planning staff is comprised of 14 members, divided into sections covering specific countries, economics, and hot button issues. They prepare reports which are cleared through Mr. Abawi and then forwarded to the Foreign Minister.

Recommendations

¶3. (U) Post recommends the Department's Policy Planning staff send the MFA a note supportive of their interest in establishing links between policy planning offices, and Post further recommends that the Department invite the director and a few staff of the MFA Policy Planning division to Washington for an introductory meeting with their counterparts at the Department, followed by a reciprocal visit to Baghdad.

¶4. (C) Post views this as an opportunity to begin discussions on one or two functional or regional strategic issues, such as future MFA policy toward Iran and the Iranian presence in Iraq, as well as how the MFA can define its role in regional affairs.

¶5. (C) Providing training and liaison services in this area will encourage the kind of strategic planning and professional tradecraft that the MFA needs to be doing to mature as a ministry.

Follow-up

16. (U) Mr. Labid expressed interest in a follow-up meeting to discuss these issues in more detail when he returns from Saudi Arabia at the end of March.
SPECKHARD